

Lived Experiences of BIPA Teachers with International Exposure in Fostering Foreign Learners' Motivation at UPNVJT's Bridge Joint Courses 2025

Dewi Puspa Arum¹, Suhaillee Sohnui², Rattanaporn Muhry³, Matthew Nepomuceno⁴

¹Department of Indonesian Linguistics, UPN "Veteran" Jawa Timur, Indonesia

²Department of Oriental Languages, Chiang Mai University, Thailand

³Department of Business Administration, Sarasas Suvarnabhumi Institute of Technology, Thailand

⁴Department of Teacher Education and Lifelong Learning, Far Eastern University, Philippines

dewiarum.agrotek@upnjatim.ac.id¹, suhaillee.s@cmu.ac.th², muhryrattanaporn@gmail.com³,

mmnepomuceno@feucavite.edu.ph⁴

ABSTRACT

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This phenomenological study aims to explore and interpret the lived experiences of Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing (BIPA) teachers with international exposure in fostering foreign learners' motivation within the Bridge Joint Courses 2025 at Universitas Pembangunan Nasional "Veteran" Jawa Timur (UPNVJT). Situated within an intercultural collaboration between Indonesian and Thai lecturers, the study views BIPA teachers as language instructors and cultural mediators navigating diverse learning expectations and communication styles. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and reflective journals involving six BIPA teachers with prior international teaching or academic exchange experience. The data were analyzed thematically to capture the essence of teachers' lived experiences in intercultural classrooms. The findings reveal three main themes: (1) international exposure reshapes teachers' pedagogical orientations toward intercultural sensitivity and adaptive motivational strategies; (2) it enhances classroom management through intercultural mediation, differentiated communication, and relational trust; and (3) learner motivation emerges as relational and empathy-driven, grounded in teachers' emotional and cultural engagement with students. These findings demonstrate that international exposure fosters teachers' reflexivity, intercultural empathy, and professional identity as global educators, contributing to the discourse on intercultural pedagogy in Indonesian language education.



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A. INTRODUCTION

The rapid internationalization of higher education has brought significant transformations in language teaching practices, particularly in the field of *Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing* (BIPA) (Borbon et al., 2025). As Indonesia strengthens its position in global education diplomacy, BIPA programs increasingly function not only as sites of linguistic instruction but also as spaces for intercultural interaction and cultural representation (Nagauleng et al., 2024). In this context, language learning extends beyond grammatical mastery to include cultural negotiation, emotional engagement, and the cultivation of learner motivation within intercultural environments.

Within this landscape, BIPA teachers play a central role as mediators between language, culture, and learners. Teachers with international exposure are often reported to demonstrate pedagogical practices that bridge linguistic and cultural differences more effectively, drawing on their global experiences to respond to learner diversity (Liu et al., 2023). International

experiences, such as overseas teaching assignments, academic exchange programs, and collaborative international teaching initiatives, have been shown to enhance teachers' intercultural sensitivity and adaptive pedagogical skills (Thinh, 2024). Motivation, as a key factor in second language acquisition, significantly influences learners' engagement, persistence, and learning outcomes (Cucinotta, 2019; Casoli-Uvsløkk & Brevik, 2023). Importantly, learner motivation is shaped not only by instructional design but also by teachers' intercultural awareness, communication practices, and classroom climate.

The Bridge Joint Courses 2025 at Universitas Pembangunan Nasional "Veteran" Jawa Timur (UPNVJT) provide a meaningful and authentic context for examining these dynamics. This international collaborative program involves joint teaching between Indonesian and Thai lecturers, creating an intercultural learning environment in which BIPA teachers engage directly with foreign learners (Miftahurrahman et al., 2025). Within this setting, teachers are required to integrate linguistic instruction, cultural mediation, and motivational strategies simultaneously, making it a relevant site for investigating how international exposure is enacted in classroom practice.

A substantial body of prior research has explored BIPA pedagogy from various perspectives. Several studies have focused on instructional challenges and teaching strategies, identifying issues such as complex grammar, cultural differences, and the need for adaptive and student-centered approaches (Yulianeta & Siddique, 2024; Subandiyah et al., 2023). Other research has examined learning difficulties in specific modes and contexts, including online BIPA instruction, highlighting challenges related to vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, cultural barriers, and limited opportunities for practice (Dhari & Syafryadin, 2025).

In relation to learner motivation, studies have documented that BIPA learners often face affective challenges such as low confidence and limited exposure, but that motivation can increase when learners receive strong support from teachers and the learning environment (Srikandi, 2022). Quantitative and mixed-methods studies further confirm that motivation has a positive and significant correlation with BIPA learners' learning outcomes (Nursyairofi et al., 2020) and that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors play important roles among Southeast Asian exchange students (Suraya et al., 2021). Complementing this, research on motivation among learners of Southeast Asian languages, including Indonesian, suggests that motivation is often driven by instrumental goals rather than integrative orientation (Ren & Wang, 2025).

Another strand of research has emphasized the importance of intercultural competence in BIPA teaching. Studies indicate that while intercultural elements are present in teaching materials and classroom practices, they are not always systematically integrated into assessment or broader cultural programs (Diani & Halimi, 2020). Research conducted in international contexts highlights that BIPA teachers need a strong understanding of learners' cultural backgrounds and effective cross-cultural communication strategies to achieve teaching success (Idris & Muftia, 2021). Similarly, studies on cross-cultural BIPA learning identify both challenges, such as differing perspectives and adaptation demands, and opportunities, including cultural diplomacy and intercultural dialogue (Khoirunnisa & Sunarya, 2023).

Beyond the BIPA context, research in foreign language education consistently demonstrates that international teaching and study-abroad experiences contribute positively to teachers' professional development. Overseas teaching experience has been associated with increased global awareness, the use of authentic instructional materials, and heightened intercultural sensitivity (Taşdemir, 2022). Quantitative studies further suggest that teachers with international experience tend to perform more effectively, particularly in applying cognitive and reflective teaching approaches (Qin & Mohammed, 2024).

Taken together, these studies illustrate that while prior research has acknowledged the roles of intercultural awareness, global experience, and motivation in language education, a

notable research gap remains. Most existing studies focus on learner difficulties, instructional strategies, or measurable learning outcomes. Very limited attention has been given to how BIPA teachers' lived experiences with international exposure are internally perceived, reflected upon, and transformed into motivational practices in intercultural classroom settings. Moreover, few studies adopt a phenomenological perspective to examine the cognitive, emotional, and reflective dimensions of teachers' professional experiences in authentic international teaching contexts.

This gap becomes increasingly urgent in international collaborative programs such as the Bridge Joint Courses 2025, where teachers are continuously required to negotiate cultural differences, manage expectations, build relational trust, and sustain learner motivation in real time. Without a deeper understanding of teachers' lived experiences, efforts to strengthen intercultural pedagogy and motivation-oriented BIPA instruction risk remaining procedural rather than reflective and empathetic.

In response to this gap, the present study adopts a qualitative phenomenological approach that conceptualizes teaching as a lived experience shaped by international exposure and intercultural interaction. The novelty of this study lies in its emphasis on the lived experiences of BIPA teachers with international exposure, treating teaching not merely as a technical or procedural activity but as a deeply cognitive and emotional practice shaped by global encounters and intercultural engagement. Unlike previous studies that primarily focus on learner outcomes, instructional materials, or observable teaching techniques, this research explores the internal dimensions of teaching, including how teachers construct meaning, reflect on their experiences, and translate intercultural insights into motivational strategies that enhance learner engagement.

Furthermore, the context of the Bridge Joint Courses 2025 offers a unique and authentic setting rarely examined in previous BIPA studies. The collaborative structure between Indonesia and Thailand creates a living laboratory in which language instruction, cultural negotiation, and motivational dynamics intersect in real time, thereby revealing how international exposure influences both pedagogical identity and classroom practice (Miftahurrahman et al., 2025).

Through this lens, the study contributes to three interrelated strands of scholarly discourse. First, it advances the understanding of intercultural pedagogy in Southeast Asian higher education, particularly in contexts where language teaching serves as a medium of regional collaboration (Haliq et al., 2025; Tiawati et al., 2024; Solikhah & Budiharso, 2020). Second, it enriches the discussion of teacher professional identity in internationalized language programs by highlighting how overseas experience fosters pedagogical transformation (Zhang & Wang, 2022; Fang et al., 2024; Vu et al., 2024; Yang & Han, 2022). Third, it deepens the analysis of motivational dynamics in foreign language classrooms by demonstrating how teachers' global perspectives can inspire learner motivation through empathy, inclusivity, and cultural resonance (Thuy et al., 2024; Henry & Thorsen, 2019; Diez & Luna, 2025; Zhang, 2022).

Accordingly, this study aims to explore and interpret how BIPA teachers with international exposure cultivate motivation among foreign learners participating in the Bridge Joint Courses 2025 at Universitas Pembangunan Nasional "Veteran" Jawa Timur. Specifically, this research seeks to (1) examine how international experiences reshape teachers' pedagogical orientations and motivational strategies, and (2) analyze how these experiences are articulated through classroom management, communication practices, and intercultural engagement that foster relational and empathy-driven learner motivation.

B. METHODS

1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore and interpret the lived experiences of BIPA (Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing) teachers with international exposure in fostering foreign learners' motivation (Erana & Oficiar, 2025; Borbon et al., 2025; Tiawati et al., 2024). A phenomenological approach was selected because the primary objective of this research is not to measure variables statistically, but to understand how teachers perceive, reflect on, and give meaning to their professional practices within intercultural learning environments (Cano, 2023; Laksono & Ismiyatun, 2023).

Drawing on both Husserlian and interpretative phenomenological traditions, this study seeks to uncover the essence of teachers' lived experiences and reflective meaning-making processes in intercultural classrooms (Gaulin, 2019; Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Through this approach, the research examines how international exposure—such as teaching abroad, participating in academic exchange programs, or engaging in international collaboration—translates into pedagogical orientation, motivational strategies, and reflective awareness in BIPA classrooms. This design also enables thick description of the cognitive, emotional, and cultural dimensions of teaching, which are often underexplored in survey-based or quantitative BIPA research.

2. Research Context

The study was conducted within the Bridge Joint Courses 2025, an international collaborative program organized by Universitas Pembangunan Nasional "Veteran" Jawa Timur (UPNVJT) in partnership with several universities in Thailand. The program involves joint teaching between Indonesian and Thai lecturers in mixed-nationality classes. This context was deliberately selected because it represents an authentic intercultural learning environment in which BIPA teachers' international exposure is directly enacted through classroom interaction, cultural mediation, and motivational engagement with foreign learners.

3. Participants

The participants consisted of six BIPA teachers from Universitas Pembangunan Nasional "Veteran" Jawa Timur (UPNVJT) who had prior international exposure. Their experiences included overseas teaching assignments, participation in academic exchange programs, and involvement in international collaborative teaching initiatives. The participants varied in teaching experience, ranging from early-career lecturers (3–5 years of experience) to senior educators with more than 15 years of professional experience.

These characteristics were considered relevant because the study aims to examine how different forms and levels of international exposure influence teachers' pedagogical perspectives and motivational strategies. Purposeful sampling was employed to select participants who were able to provide rich and relevant insights into the phenomenon under investigation. The characteristics of the research participants are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of Research Participants

Code	Teaching Experience	International Exposure	Type of International Experience	Role in Bridge Joint Courses
T1	3–5 years	Yes	Academic exchange program abroad	BIPA lecturer and co-teacher
T2	3–5 years	Yes	Short-term overseas teaching assignment	BIPA lecturer and cultural mediator
T3	6–10 years	Yes	International collaborative teaching	BIPA lecturer and co-teacher
T4	11–15 years	Yes	Overseas teaching and academic exchange	Senior BIPA lecturer
T5	>15 years	Yes	International workshops and visiting lecturer	Senior BIPA lecturer and mentor
T6	>15 years	Yes	Long-term overseas teaching experience	Senior BIPA lecturer and program coordinator

4. Data Collection Techniques

To ensure depth and credibility, data were collected through multiple qualitative instruments. First, in-depth semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 60–90 minutes were conducted to capture teachers' narratives, reflections, and interpretations of their international experiences and motivational practices. Second, classroom observations were carried out across several teaching sessions to examine how motivational strategies and intercultural practices were enacted in real-time classroom interaction. Third, reflective journals written by the participants were collected to supplement interview and observation data and to document ongoing reflective processes.

All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim. Observational field notes focused on teacher–student interaction, use of cultural references, communication strategies, and indicators of learner motivation.

5. Data Analysis

Data analysis followed a thematic analysis procedure adapted for phenomenological research (Clarke & Braun, 2017). The analytical process involved familiarization with the data, initial coding, theme development, refinement, and interpretation. Codes and themes were generated inductively to capture recurring patterns related to international exposure, pedagogical orientation, intercultural classroom practices, and learner motivation. This iterative process ensured that the findings remained grounded in participants' lived experiences while being conceptually aligned with the study's theoretical framework.

6. Trustworthiness of the Study

To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies were employed. Data triangulation was achieved by combining interviews, classroom observations, and reflective journals. Member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary interpretations with participants to confirm accuracy and credibility. In addition, detailed descriptions of the research context and participants were provided to support the transferability of the findings.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. The Influence of International Experiences on Teachers' Pedagogical Perspectives and Motivational Practices

The findings indicate that international exposure plays a significant role in reshaping BIPA teachers' pedagogical perspectives and motivational practices. Teachers who have participated in overseas teaching assignments, academic exchange programs, or international collaborative initiatives tend to adopt more reflective, learner-centered, and culturally responsive

approaches. Their international experiences enable them to conceptualize language learning not merely as linguistic transmission, but as a process of cultural negotiation and relational engagement, which is central to motivating foreign learners in intercultural classrooms.

Data obtained from in-depth interviews and classroom observations reveal three dominant pedagogical transformations resulting from international exposure: (1) a shift toward intercultural sensitivity, (2) the integration of authentic cultural materials, and (3) the development of motivational scaffolding aligned with learners' cultural backgrounds. These transformations illustrate how teachers' global experiences are internalized and translated into pedagogical meaning-making processes, which is consistent with the phenomenological orientation of this study. A summary of these findings is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Themes on Teachers' Pedagogical Transformation

Theme	Indicators	Illustrative Evidence (Teacher Quotes)	Interpretation
Intercultural Sensitivity	Teachers integrate comparative cultural discussions in BIPA classes	"When my Thai students misinterpret idioms, I use examples from both Thai and Indonesian culture to help them relate."	Reflects heightened awareness of cultural nuance and inclusive communication.
Authentic Material Usage	Incorporation of Indonesian cultural artifacts, songs, and local media	"I often use Indonesian vlogs or festival videos because they allow foreign students to experience the atmosphere directly."	Encourages emotional engagement and situational motivation.
Motivational Scaffolding	Adjustment of teaching styles to learners' cultural expectations	"In Qatar, students prefer structured explanations, while Thai students respond more to humor and storytelling."	Indicates adaptive teaching shaped by intercultural encounters.

As shown in Table 2, these pedagogical transformations demonstrate that teachers with international exposure apply intercultural empathy and comparative pedagogy to make Indonesian culture more accessible and meaningful to foreign learners. Teachers frequently connect Indonesian values such as *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) and *sopan santun* (politeness) with parallel values in learners' home cultures. This comparative approach allows learners to perceive Indonesian culture as dynamic, dialogic, and relatable rather than static or exotic.

Furthermore, the use of authentic cultural materials—such as traditional songs, local news, and Indonesian digital media—bridges linguistic learning with emotional experience. Through these materials, learners encounter the Indonesian language and culture as lived realities rather than abstract academic content. This finding aligns with intercultural pedagogy frameworks that emphasize emotional safety, relevance, and empathy as essential components of motivation building (Byram, 2014; Dervin, 2020). In line with the study's objectives, these practices illustrate how international exposure enhances teachers' capacity to foster learner motivation through culturally responsive pedagogy.

Overall, international experience fosters pedagogical flexibility that transforms BIPA classrooms into spaces of intercultural dialogue. Teachers emerge not merely as transmitters of linguistic knowledge, but as mediators of cultural understanding—an essential role in sustaining learner motivation within intercultural language learning contexts.

2. Teachers' Articulation of International Experience in Managing Intercultural Classroom Dynamics

The second objective of this study examines how teachers articulate their international experiences in managing intercultural classroom dynamics that support student engagement and motivation. The findings identify three recurring practices: (1) intercultural mediation, (2) differentiated communication, and (3) reflective dialogue. These practices demonstrate how teachers operationalize their global experiences into concrete classroom management strategies. A summary of these strategies is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Classroom Management Strategies in Intercultural BIPA Contexts

Strategy	Observable Practice	Impact on Student Motivation	Supporting Evidence
Intercultural Mediation	Teachers explain cultural norms and address misunderstandings	Higher participation and willingness to communicate	Field notes: "Students laughed when the teacher compared <i>tépo seliro</i> (ເຕີບເພົາເມື່ອງ) with the Thai concept of <i>kreng jai</i> (ເກຮັງຈາີ)."
Differentiated Communication	Code-switching and simplified instruction	Learners feel supported; engagement increases	Observation: "Teacher repeats key terms in English and Indonesian; students nod and respond actively."
Reflective Dialogue	Teachers invite learner feedback	Builds relational trust and intrinsic motivation	Interview: "When I ask what activity they enjoyed, they feel valued and share ideas openly."

The findings suggest that teachers with international exposure possess strong intercultural mediation skills, enabling them to interpret cultural misunderstandings as opportunities for dialogue rather than as instructional problems. For example, when Thai learners demonstrate indirect communication styles, teachers respond with culturally sensitive explanations rather than corrective approaches. Such mediation reduces learner anxiety and sustains motivation, particularly in the early stages of language learning.

Differentiated communication also emerges as a key motivational strategy. Teachers' ability to flexibly switch between Indonesian, English, and non-verbal cues reflects an awareness of linguistic accessibility and emotional comfort. This practice mirrors international teaching norms while remaining grounded in Indonesian communicative warmth (*keakrabanan*), where relational closeness functions as a pedagogical resource rather than a boundary.

Reflective dialogue represents a mature form of intercultural pedagogy influenced by teachers' exposure to student-centered learning environments abroad. By inviting feedback and co-constructing classroom norms, teachers foster a sense of partnership, respect, and belonging. This relational orientation strengthens intrinsic motivation, as learners perceive themselves as valued participants rather than passive recipients of instruction.

3. Integrative Discussion: International Exposure, Relational Motivation, and Intercultural Pedagogy

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that international exposure shapes BIPA teachers' pedagogical orientations toward more reflective, empathetic, and innovative practices, in line with the aims outlined in the abstract. Motivation in foreign language learning is shown not only as a cognitive construct but also as a relational and culturally situated process influenced by teachers' global experiences and interpersonal engagement with learners.

Within the Bridge Joint Courses 2025, intercultural collaboration between Indonesian and Thai educators contributes to the development of a hybrid learning culture in which

intercultural empathy functions both as a pedagogical approach and as a source of learner motivation. This process develops through two interconnected dimensions. The cognitive dimension involves teachers' reinterpretation of cultural knowledge through comparative learning, while the affective dimension relates to emotional connection that supports learners' sense of belonging and sustained motivation.

These dynamics indicate that intercultural attunement through shared cultural exploration between teachers and learners strengthens pedagogical depth and motivational outcomes. Rather than weakening Indonesian identity, international exposure enhances it by enabling teachers to demonstrate openness, adaptability, and inclusivity in their teaching practices. In this context, teacher motivation serves as a mediating factor that links cultural understanding with learner engagement.

Overall, this discussion reaffirms the central argument of the study that BIPA pedagogy in intercultural settings is grounded in intercultural empathy and reflective practice. Teachers play a key role in motivating learners by translating intercultural concepts into meaningful classroom experiences.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

1. Conclusion

This study concludes that international exposure plays an important role in shaping BIPA teachers' pedagogical identity, intercultural competence, and motivational practices. Teaching abroad and participating in intercultural collaboration encourage teachers to move beyond conventional language instruction and to view teaching as an intercultural process that integrates linguistic knowledge with empathy, emotional engagement, and cultural understanding. Through these experiences, teachers develop more reflective and adaptive pedagogical approaches that are responsive to learners' cultural backgrounds and motivational needs.

In line with the findings presented in the abstract and discussion sections, BIPA teachers with international experience function as cultural mediators who support learner motivation through relational strategies such as humor, storytelling, the use of culturally grounded materials, and empathetic communication. Motivation within the Bridge Joint Courses 2025 is characterized as relational and affective, developing through trust, emotional connection, and meaningful intercultural interaction rather than through instructional pressure alone. These findings suggest that international exposure contributes not only to teachers' professional development but also to the growth of emotional awareness, adaptability, and global perspectives in intercultural teaching contexts.

Overall, the study affirms that international exposure enhances BIPA teachers' capacity to create inclusive, motivating, and culturally responsive learning environments. In doing so, teachers strengthen their role as facilitators of intercultural understanding and contributors to educational diplomacy.

2. Suggestions

Based on the findings of this study, several focused recommendations are proposed for future practice and research.

First, institutions managing BIPA programs, such as Universitas Pembangunan Nasional "Veteran" Jawa Timur, are encouraged to position international collaborative initiatives, including the Bridge Joint Courses, not merely as short-term or ceremonial activities but as sustainable educational strategies. Structured faculty exchange programs, joint curriculum development, and long-term intercultural teaching partnerships can contribute to the continuous development of teachers' pedagogical competence and motivational practices.

Second, teacher professional development programs should incorporate reflective practice and intercultural pedagogy as essential components. Providing systematic opportunities for teachers to reflect on their international experiences can strengthen their ability to translate global exposure into meaningful classroom practices that support learner motivation.

Third, future research is recommended to examine learner motivation using mixed-methods approaches that combine qualitative insights with quantitative measures in order to capture motivational change more comprehensively. Further studies may also explore similar intercultural teaching contexts across different regions or institutional settings to enhance the transferability of the findings.

Finally, future studies could investigate how Indonesian cultural values, such as *rasa hormat*, *kebersamaan*, and *gotong royong*, may be integrated more systematically into motivational frameworks within BIPA instruction. Such efforts can help ensure that Indonesian language education remains culturally grounded while responding effectively to the needs of global learners.

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